

Gradations of productivity: evidence from Romanian phonology  
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Phonological productivity can be viewed as a continuum going from automatic, unrestricted processes to alternations affecting just a few words. English examples that approximate these extremes are the aspiration of initial voiceless stops and the past tense forming ablaut in *teach-taught*.

In between these extremes we find processes subject to various restrictions, such as non-derived environment blockage (NDEB, Kiparsky 1973), level-ordering restrictions (Siegel 1974), restrictions to the lexical component (Mohanan 1983), lexical conservatism and inflection dependence (Steriade 1999, 2007). In all these cases, a phonological process lacks fully general application, but the nature of the restriction differs: processes subject to NDEB are, in principle, free to apply across all morpheme boundaries, whereas level-restricted processes apply to some affixed forms but not others. Lexically conservative and inflection-dependent processes apply to an affixed form only if they are guaranteed to have applied in some other affixed form.

Until now the assumption has been that different mechanisms underlie the restrictions involved in NDEB, level ordering and lexical conservatism. In this talk I use evidence from Romanian to argue that these restrictions refer to gradations of productivity rather than to unrelated dimensions on which processes can differ. Two proposals will be explored:

H1: Derived environments, level-ordered restrictions, lexical conservatism, inflection dependence and lexical exceptions are variants of the same property. They are syndromes of lexical exceptionality. There is no difference of formal status between them.

H2: The observed differences between restriction types reduce to differences in the kind of information that cues the exceptional applicability of a process to a given lexical item.